



Women Supporting Women

*Government Administration and Elections Committee  
Public Hearing - March 10, 2021*

***In Support of***

- ***Raised Bill #6578, AN ACT CONCERNING PARTICIPATION IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS***
- ***Raised Bill #1017, AN ACT CONCERNING ELECTION ADMINISTRATION***

Chairperson Flexer, Chairperson Fox, and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

PoliticaCT urges you to support Raised House Bill #6578, *An Act Concerning Participation in the Electoral Process* and Raised Senate Bill #1017, *An Act Concerning Election Administration*.

PoliticaCT is a membership-based statewide organization whose mission is to build a more progressive Connecticut. As an organization that believes fair and inclusive representation matters to a well-functioning democracy, PoliticaCT urges you to support H.B. #6578 to:

- 1.) Restore voting rights to people who have been released from confinement by a state or federal authority, but who remain on parole or are in the process of paying outstanding fines relating to their conviction.

As of 2020, there were 4,642 formerly state-incarcerated people on parole living in our communities who were denied the right to vote in elections affecting these communities.<sup>1</sup> There are also a smaller number on parole from a federal facility who are also denied their voting rights in Connecticut.

Our state's current law prohibiting people on parole from voting is one of the most stringent in the country and is a remaining piece of broader bans that prevented ex-felons from voting for their entire lifetimes. These policies have a well-documented history of targeting people of color and have disproportionately disenfranchised Black and brown people. Nationwide, there are approximately

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<sup>1</sup><https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/OPM/CJPPD/CjResearch/MonthlyIndicators/2019---2020-Monthly-Indicators-Reports/MonthlyIndicatorsReport-FEB-2020-FINAL-22620.pdf?la=en>



6.2 million citizens with felony convictions who are barred from voting.<sup>2</sup> More than two million Black people -- almost 8% of all Black adults -- are prevented from voting because of felony convictions, compared to just under 2% of non-Blacks. This current policy has the direct effect of significantly reducing the political power of Black communities and other communities of color.

The right to vote is fundamental to our nation's democracy and should be guaranteed to every citizen. The concept of a second chance society requires that we begin to dismantle obstacles to successful integration, remove barriers to full participation in our society and unlock opportunities for returning neighbors to live up to their highest potential. Permitting those on parole or with outstanding fines to vote is an important step toward both supporting people who have served their sentence to reintegrate into society and ensuring our state laws and practices are anti-racist.

- 2.) Codify Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) into state law to make voter registration easy and streamlined for all eligible Connecticut residents, and automatically update voter rolls and encourage participation in our democratic process. The current AVR through our state Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) has been effective, so we also urge you to expand AVR to additional state agencies -- including, but not limited to, the Department of Social Services (DSS), HUSKY, Department of Developmental Services (DDS), our community colleges and state universities to give more people, including those who do not utilize DMV services, the opportunity to easily register to vote.

PoliticaCT also urges you to support Raised Senate Bill #1017, *An Act Concerning Election Administration* -- specifically to make permanent the official Absentee Ballot Drop Boxes in all cities and towns. These Drop Boxes made voting easy, safe, and convenient for voters in 2020. Connecticut has already invested time and federal dollars in procuring these secure boxes and in educating the public on their use. We should continue this popular and effective program for the future.

Thank you for your consideration.

Janée Woods Weber, President  
PoliticaCT

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<sup>2</sup> Michael Wines, "Why So Many Kentuckians Are Barred from Voting on Tuesday, and for Life," *New York Times*, November 4, 2018.